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Senate Approves More for Jobless

Senate Majority Takes Advantage of Bush Money for Unemployed

LANSING – On Wednesday, August 13, the state Senate approved legislation that would allow workers to continue getting unemployment payments while looking for a job.

“We must remove the sting of unemployment to the extent that we can,” said State Senator Jud Gilbert, (R-Algonac), a supporter of the legislation. “Our families and neighbors deserve our collective support when the economy is still in a recovery and not yet fully recovered.”

On May 28, 2003, President George W. Bush signed legislation allowing for the continuation of the Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC) program, which provides up to 13 weeks of federally funded jobless benefits to workers who exhaust all of their state unemployment benefits. The TEUC had been scheduled to end on May 31, 2003, but the new legislation continues the program until the end of December 2003. Jobless workers must claim their first week of TEUC by December 27, 2003, in order to receive their full entitlement.

The Bureau of Workers and Unemployment Compensation (BWUC), which administers the state’s UI system, estimates that the legislation would provide \$206 million to an approximately 53,000 long-term unemployed workers in the state.

To qualify for the temporary extended benefits under HB 4945 (H-2), unemployed workers must:

- Have exhausted their state benefits;
- Have received their last unemployment check for the week ending on, or after, May 24, 2003; and
- Submit an application for extended benefits with the BWUC.

The \$206 million to unemployed workers is comprised of:

- \$181 million in federal program funds;
- \$23 million from surplus revenue in the UI Trust Fund’s “non-chargeable” account (the Trust Fund currently has a total balance of \$1.6 billion); and
- \$1.75 million from revenue in the UI’s penalty and interests account. This one-time transfer would be reimbursed with an appropriation of \$1.75 million from the General Fund in FY 2004-05.

“It is important that, as the recovery continues, we help our fellow citizens who want to work and provide for their families,” Gilbert said.